

To the Members of the STEVENAGE URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Stevenage,
January 25, 1904.
To the Members of the Stevenage Urban District Council.

Gentlemen,

This year the health of the district has been exceptionally good. This is to a great extent to be accounted for by the season, which has been dull and wet.

The following are the chief statistics with comments:—

	1891.	1901.	1902.	1903.	England & Wales, 1901.
Population by census	3309	3957	4075*	4125*	
Area (exclusive of water)	4545	4545	4545	4545	
Number of inhabited houses	730	893	918*	933*	
Average density of population per house	4.5	4.40	4.43*	4.42*	
Birth rate for corrected population	28.83	27.50	25.52	23.84	28.50
Total deaths registered in district	54	48	52	46	
Corrections (additions)	2	5	2	2	
Corrected death rate	13.8	13.25	13.25	11.39	16.9
Zymotic death rate	.51	1.50	.19	.72	
Death rate from diarrhoea	.52	0	0	0	0.91
Death rate from phthisis	1.56	1.26	.38	.95	1.26
Death rate from cancer	.52	.75	.38	.72	.83
Infant mortality per 1,000 births	91.09	81.81	144.23	58.82	151.0
Total deaths over 65 years	18	20	16	23	
years					

*Estimated.

The chief points worth notice are:—

1. The increase in the birth rate. This year it has reached the average for England and Wales. The birth rate has been steadily declining all over the country for the last thirty years—in the years 1871-80 it was 35.5, now it is 28.6. This is a matter for serious consideration.

The number of children born in your district this year was 119 (55 boys and 64 girls), as against 104 last year.

2. The total number of deaths registered in the district was 46, and to these have to be added the deaths of two persons resident in the district but who died in public institutions outside. This gives a total of 48 deaths (25 males and 23 females) as against 54 (23 males and 31 females) last year.

The death rate works out at 11.39 per 1,000, as against 13.25 in 1902. The county death rate last year was 12.25, and that for England and Wales 16.5.

Last year of the total number of deaths 15 were of children under one year of age. This year only 7 deaths occurred under that age. This is not only actually less than half in number, but is even better proportionately. It gives an infant mortality per 1,000 births of 58.82, as against 144.23 last year. The county rate last year was 93.93, and that for England and Wales 133.

The following table gives the deaths at different ages last year and this:—

	1902†	1903
Under 1 year	15	7
Between 1 and 5 years	8	4
5 and 15 "	1	0
15 and 25 "	2	0
25 and 65 "	12	14
Over 65 years	16	23

The chief point in this is the decrease of deaths up to 25, and the increase of those of old people over 65. During the first quarter of year 14 persons died, or 13.57 per 1,000; during the second quarter of year 12 persons died, or 11.60 per thousand; during the 3rd quarter of year 9 persons died, or 8.72 per 1,000; during the 4th quarter of year 13 persons died, or 12.60 per 1,000.

3. The zymotic death rate has increased from .72 to .72 due to three deaths from whooping cough and six from tuberculous disease.

There were no deaths from any other infectious disease.

There were again no deaths from diarrhoea, due in great part no doubt to the cool summer.

The rate from phthisis and cancer has gone up slightly, but is below the average for England and Wales. One death more or less from these diseases in a place of this size makes all the difference in the statistics.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

Deaths.

	1900.	1901.	1902.	1903.
Smallpox	0	0	0	0
Measles	0	2	0	0
Whooping cough	0	1	1	3
Diphtheria	0	3	0	0
Typhoid fever	0	0	0	0
Influenza	0	0	0	0
Diarrhoea	0	0	0	0
Puerperal fever	1	0	0	0
Erysipelas	0	0	0	0
Tuberculous disease	7	8	4	6
Total	10	14	5	9

Notifications.

	1900.	1901.	1902.	1903.
Smallpox	0	0	0	0
Scarlet fever	0	8	1	0
Diphtheria	1	4	0	0
Typhoid fever	0	0	3	0
Puerperal fever	1	0	1	2
Erysipelas	2	1	0	3
Chicken pox	—	—	4	0*
Measles	—	—	—	0*
Total	4	13	9	5

*Chicken pox was only made a notifiable disease by you in 1902 and measles in 1903.

This year again has been very free from notifiable diseases as apart from three cases of erysipelas, the only other cases were two of puerperal fever. The cause of the first case was not discovered, but the second one was attended to by the same nurse and occurred within a fortnight of the first. Both did well.

There were no cases of smallpox, scarlet fever, diphtheria, typhoid fever, measles or chicken pox.

Influenza.—During the first two months of the year there were a considerable number of cases of influenza and there were also some at the end of the year. None of them were very severe, and there were no deaths directly due to this disease.

Whooping Cough.—From March onwards there has been a considerable outbreak of whooping cough. This caused three deaths among children.

While on the subject of notifiable diseases I would like to point out that there must in the future be a number of cases of chicken pox and measles which are never seen by the doctor, and that by law it is incumbent on the householder of the house in which infectious disease occurs, as well as on the medical man attending, to report these cases to the medical officer of health.

During the year you passed the following resolution:—"That in those cases of infectious disease in which the Council consider it advisable the necessary serum be provided at the public expense." This is a very wise resolution, as in many cases it is impossible for the poor to pay for these serums, and it is hardly fair to expect the doctor to do so out of his own pocket.

Vaccination.—During the year vaccination has been performed on most of the children born. There were very few cases of revaccination.

Isolation Hospital Board.—The Joint Hospital Board have, I believe, selected a site for the new hospital for infectious diseases, and an inquiry has been held by a representative of the Local Government Board

as to its fitness. I had no notice of this inquiry, and in fact I did not know of it until it had been held. Had I known I should certainly have been present, as from a Stevenage point of view the site in many ways does not appear suitable.

The smallpox hospital has been kept in readiness, but there has been no need to use it.

Disinfection.—There is still no disinfecting apparatus in the district.

Water Supply.—The water supply from the Council well has been continuous. There has doubtless been less drain on it this year on account of the wet season than previously. There has been no complaint from the outlying districts which are not supplied from the Council's well of any shortage of water.

The town water was analysed by Dr. Thomas Stevenson during the year, and the following is a copy of his report:—

"May 23, 1903.

"The sample which measured about half a gallon was enclosed in a Winchester quart glass stoppered bottle, and that for bacteriological examination in sterilized glass bottles, secured, sealed and labelled, from the Stevenage Urban District Council, P. H. Dunn, medical officer of health, May 21, 1903."

"The water was free from odour, and when viewed in bulk was colourless and clear."

"It contained and yielded in grains per gallon:—

Total solid matter	20.44
Loss on ignition	1.68
Combined chlorine	0.97
Equal to common salt	1.60
Nitrogen as nitrates	0.20
Nitrates	none
Ammonia	traces
Albumenoid or organic ammonia	0.003
Oxygen required to oxidise the organic matter	0.004

Hardness in degrees:—

Temporary 14.7

Permanent none

14.7

Number of bacteria per one cubic centimetre.. 3

"This is an excellent pure water, well fitted for drinking and all other domestic purposes. It is of only moderate hardness, and the whole of the hardness is removable by boiling. Neither the chemical analysis nor the bacteriological examination shows any organic pollution."

This seems to me to be an excellent report, and I would suggest that the water be examined periodically, say every two years.

Drainage.—The sewage farm is worked on the broad irrigation principle. It has worked well during the year. Occasionally when the wind has been in the south-east and when the sewage is being distributed over that part of the farm which is near the road there is a smell which is disagreeable to the users of the road. This happens but seldom. At other times there is no noticeable smell about the farm.

The ventilating shafts put up last year have worked well. There have been no complaints about the manholes this year.

There are still some houses connected with the old sewer, I believe. As they are found out they are dealt with by being connected with the new.

No further arrangements have been made for compelling owners of houses having closets connected to the sewer to have a flushing cistern. This is very necessary.

The scheme for laying a new surface water drain and filling in the old brick sewer and the weir pond seems to have come to a standstill. As you are aware the old brick sewer is continually being broken in and is a constant cause of expense and danger.

Seavenging.—On the whole this has been done satisfactorily. There have been a few complaints that the cart has not called regularly, but every effort is made to clear away the rubbish at stated intervals. Very often the householders themselves are unreasonable and think the cart can call on any day and at any hour they wish.

Nuisances.—These have mostly been of a slight nature, and have been removed without trouble.

One great nuisance remains and that is of the manure dropping off the farmers' carts as they go along the roads. This is not only unhealthy and unsightly, but it tends to rot the roads. You have a by-law dealing with this matter, but no steps have been taken to enforce it. The cause of this nuisance might be easily remedied if the farmers or their men would not overload their carts and try to make them hold more than they can. It cannot pay the farmer to leave an appreciable part of his manure on the road.

Among the nuisances must be included the fair. If you cannot see your way to take steps to have it done away with or removed out of the High-street, surely some means might be taken to make it less insanitary, and a limit put to the number of caravans allowed to take their stand on the Bowling Green and neighbouring highway. At present an unlimited number of caravans with some hundreds of van population come into the town more than twenty-four hours before the fair opens. No sanitary arrangements (other than the supply of town water) are made for these people, to say nothing of the numerous visitors from the neighbouring towns and villages. Consequently the High-street is rendered dirty and offensive for days afterwards. I would suggest that:—

1. Temporary conveniences should be put up.

2. Some better supervision be exercised over the position of the various shows and the number be kept within proper limits.

3. The vans be not allowed to stand on any of the footpaths nor within a certain distance (say 20 feet) of the neighbouring houses.

4. A fee be charged for each stand to help to cover the expense of clearing up the refuse after the fair is over.

Housing.—There is nothing fresh to be said on this subject.

PREMISES UNDER SUPERVISION.

1. *Dairies and Cowsheeds*.—These have all been visited during the year by your Inspector and myself. There is nothing fresh to report about them. These are mostly clean, but with one or two exceptions they were never built for the purposes to which they are now put, and consequently at best only makeshift affairs. You have passed regulations with respect to them this year, and this will strengthen our hands in dealing with those which do not come up to the mark.

2. *Slaughterhouses*.—These we have also visited. There is nothing fresh to be said about them. Several of them are unfit for the use they are now put to, and were never meant to be used in that way.

3. *Bakeries*.—Your Inspector and myself also visited all the bakeries during the year. They are nearly all of them well fitted for the purpose of baking.

4. *Lodging Houses*.—There are none in the district.

5. *Factories, Workshops and Workplaces*.—There is yet no register of these places for your district. Those which have been visited are satisfactory, but it is impossible for us to find out and visit every one without having some list to start with.

By-laws.—These are the same as last year with the addition of those relating to dairies, cowsheeds and milkshops. You have considered new building by-laws, but they have not yet received the consent of the Local Government Board.

The usual statistics are appended.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

PHILIP H. DUNN,

Medical Officer of Health.